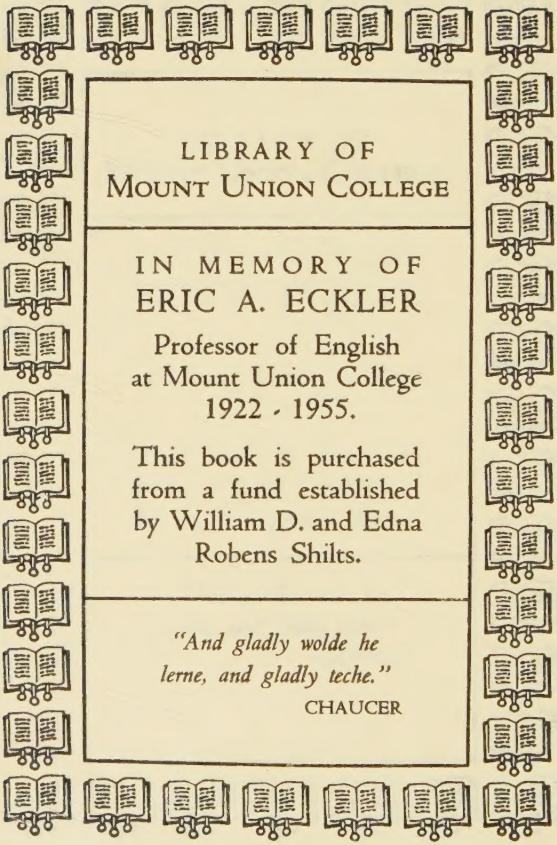
# THE LAST BLACKBIRD


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ERIC A. ECKLER
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at Mount Union College
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*"And gladly wolde he*
*lerne, and gladly teche."*
CHAUCER

# THE LAST BLACKBIRD

## AND OTHER LINES


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# THE
# LAST BLACKBIRD
## *AND OTHER LINES*

BY
RALPH HODGSON

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INSCRIBED TO

*GEORGE A. B. DEWAR*

*The writer wishes to thank the Editors of* The Saturday Review *and* The Speaker *for permission to republish some of the verses included in this book.*

## LINES

No pitted toad behind a stone
  But hoards some secret grace;
The meanest slug with midnight gone
  Has left a silver trace.

No dullest eyes to beauty blind,
  Uplifted to the beast,
But prove some kin with angel kind,
  Though lowliest and least.

## THE TREASURE-BOX

I WOND'RING see the rainbow stain
  The sea; I dumbly guess
Why on a wintry window-pane
  Late Edens effloresce;

If bubbles at the river's brim
  Have souls for destiny;
Why twilight freights the blackbird's hymn
  With deeper mystery;

If chiff-chaffs voyaging in March
  Are charted by the light
Of angels' eyes whose pinions arch
  A hemisphere with night;

## THE TREASURE-BOX

What ocean maids through ocean shells
  Sing ocean roundelay;
What tears are those in evening bells
  A harvest field away;

What gladness fills the yellow wren
  When June is in the thorn;
What triumph knows the great sun when
  A winter rose is born.

The gold-winged exquisites that shine
  Upon the yew in May
But sadness give this heart of mine
  That cannot know their day.

I wond'ring watch the new gnats weave
  Mad mazes in the sky,
And guess their joys as they achieve
  A moment's empery.

## THE TREASURE-BOX

I guess the tales on buntings' eggs—
  Who runs may never read—
Drain speculation to the dregs
  About a thistle seed.

I have a crystal treasure-box,
  Its stores are held from me;
I cannot force its thousand locks,
  And have no master-key.

## ST. ATHELSTAN

O NOT the rain that wets his face,
And not the winds that beat and chill,
Not these bid shepherd mend his pace
To-night across the hill.

It is no sheep hath shepherd lost,
Yet hoarse he cries, and crying will
He cross again as he hath crost
And crost again the hill.

A strong man's eyes with grief a-swim
Are like to make an angel's dim:
Whose prayers him choke or ever twice
He prays will angels sacrifice
A time of blessed Paradise
To minister to him.

Then, shepherd, kneel and plead thy care:
  Saint Athelstan will help a man!
  What prayer a weeping shepherd can,
  The shepherd makes Saint Athelstan,
And makes again his prayer.

O shepherd, look! the cup of night
  Is broke, and clouds, dividing, yield
  To thee a sign, to thine a shield;
Look! comes to earth a line of light,
From Heaven it comes and waxes bright
  As Heaven itself concealed.

Now hasten whither thou art signed,
And on a pitchy moorland find
A wide and wild and pitchy wood
As ever on a moorland stood
With mountain lands behind.

## ST. ATHELSTAN

Where pathless lost lands lie away
  Rise mountains gray and banded black
With forests under mountains gray,
  And on gray mountains mountains stack
  And dwindle to a skiey rack
For clouds there fixed as they.

And there's a stony slanting pit,
  And deep a mountain-side it mines,
A crevice in a mountain split,
  And capped with fallen pines.

So deep above the cape is drawn
  No winds come there nor ever sun;
There dusk is ever one with dawn,
  And noon with midnight one.

Lone habitant the cavern hath,
  And lean at eve she stole away,
And gray she picked her secret path
  As ever wolf was gray.

A chilly wolf it is she runs:
  An empty maw's a numbing bed.
  Over the mountain's cloudy head
Climbed, seen or hid, three winter suns
  All since the gray wolf fed.

And on she comes in starving state
To hunt the marsh where last she ate,
  And wander, whining, at a loss
To rid her of the weary weight
Behind the rib herself would freight;
  To leave the marsh and hunt the moss,
  And howl her hunger overcross
A land obliterate.

She's on a bank with willow hung . . .
What news upon the night is sprung?
  The gray wolf there, with eyes aslant
And nostril slits agape, gives tongue
  And knells, not calls, her want.

What thing is hinted in the wind?
  Some wasted hare or sodden bird
Dies in the grass, or feebled hind
  Is fallen from the herd?

Nay, none of these is rumoured there;
  There is no knowledge in the wind
Of dying bird or dying hare
  Or herd-forsaken hind.

But wandered feet have run the wild,
  And in the wood are eyes affright;
It is the shepherd's haunted child
  Is in the wood to-night.

'Twixt cloud and cloud a small sun shone
  And weakly ruled the winter day;
Was shepherd on his labours gone,
The shepherd's boy from home alone
  Went, wonder-wist, astray.

## ST. ATHELSTAN

The sun fell like a god rebuked,
And east the lost boy turned, and west,
And south and north the lost boy looked,
And is the dark wood's guest.

As down the trees the shadow crept
A night-bird through the shadow swept;
The lost boy heard her evil scream,
And where he stood he sank and wept
His way to icy dream.

And wakes to see—what sees he there,
Or is his sense still led in dream?
What tricks with hope his chill despair
Who heard the night-bird scream?

As were there moon might fade her stream
With beauty through wet woods and bare,
Fades in his view a silver stair
Lit by a fading beam;

Lies in his view a fellow-guest
  Irradiant there with gentle light;
Was never mortal vision blest
  With lamb so holy white.

But, lost boy, listen—is it wind
That rustles in the thorn behind?
  Nay, listen—look! O sight all dread!
The lost boy stares and, horror-blind,
  Swoons down upon his bed.

Ay, shepherd crying, louder cry,
And let thy anguish, rising, buy
  New grace for him whom Terror's wing
Hath felled, lest he a midnight lie
  In madding trance, and wakening,
Open an idiot eye.

O shepherd come into the wood,
  And call and hear and clasp again
  Whose eyes, if weeping, open sane—
Whose eyes have looked on sainted blood
  And seen an angel slain.

## ST. ATHELSTAN

Look in the sky, thou favoured man,
  And raise thy joy and higher raise
What praise a weeping shepherd can!
The shepherd makes Saint Athelstan—
  And makes again, his praise.

With holy ruin grass is red
Where in a wood a gray wolf fed:
The wolf is in her mountain pit,
And night's a world to west of it,
Day tops the mountain's head.

The grass is red; will rains remove
The hallowed mark; soon Spring will glove
The wood anew, and none will tell
The pity of that miracle;
It will be told where angels dwell,
Its wonder and their love.

## THE SEDGE-WARBLER

In early summer moonlight I have strayed
Down pass and wildway of the wooded hill
With wonder as again the sedge-bird made

His old, old ballad new beside the mill.
And I have stolen closer to the song
That, lispèd low, would swell and change to shrill,

Thick, chattered cheeps that seemed not to belong
Of right to the frail elfin throat that threw
Them on the stream, their waker. There among

The willows I have watched as over flew
A noctule making zigzag round the lone,
Dark elm whose shadow clipt grotesque the new

Green lawn below. On softest breezes blown
From some far brake, the cruising fern-owl's cry
Would stay my steps; a beetle's nearing drone

Would steal upon my sense and pass and die.
There I have heard in that still, solemn hour
The quickened thorn from slaving weeds untie

A prisoned leaf or furlèd bloom, whose dower
Of incense yet burned in the warm June night;
By darkness cozened from his grot to cower

And curve the night long, that shy eremite
The lowly, banded eft would seek his prey;
And thousand worlds my silent world would light
Till broke the babel of the summer day.

## THE MISSEL THRUSH

I saw the sun burn in the blue,
And a missel thrush flew by,
And the missel thrush to a chestnut flew.

I saw a white cloud in the sky,
And linnets sang—their breasts were red;
And linnets sang melodiously.

And up the sky the white cloud sped,
The wind woke crying in the trees,
And the white cloud battened, his bulk was
fed

By a thousand clouds that swarmed like bees;
I heard the rough wind whistle shrill,
And the clouds banked up in billowy seas.

## THE MISSEL THRUSH

O wild the day that was so still !
The elm flung tribute of her green,
And linnets tossed from hedge to hill.

The sun was gone and the wind blew keen,
The clouds grew gray and grayer grew,
The sun was gone behind the screen.

The wind blew wild and wilder blew,
And shriller screamed and louder bawled,
And spun with fury round the yew.

Like a bruisèd snake the yew branch crawled
And cricked and hissed like a bruisèd snake
Where the sheltering blackbird shrank appalled,

And waking slept and slept awake
And huddled stupid from the day,
Nor heard the clatt'ring thunder shake

## THE MISSEL THRUSH

The cloud that hung so low and gray;
I heard the thunder shake the cloud,
And the rough wind come and die away.

I heard the gray thrush piping loud
From the wheezing chestnut-tree;
The gray thrush gripped the spray that bowed

Beneath the storm, and brave sang he—
O, he sang brave as he were one
Who hailed a people newly free!

But all was fear and hope was none,
For Heav'n bled flame as Heav'n were Hell;
Still the thrush sang blithely on.

The rough wind sank and the rough wind fell—
O, the rough wind died upon the hill,
And thunder was its passing-bell.

## THE MISSEL THRUSH

The gray cloud burst, I saw it spill
Black floods as skiey seas fell whole.
The thrush sang with amazing skill;

The gray thrush heard the thunders roll,
And sang and heard not what he sang.
The Storm King claimed a noble toll,

I saw his golden fang,
I saw it close upon the wood
That loud with thrush notes rang.

I looked again: the tempest's hood
Was torn across; I saw the sky;
So green and new the chestnut stood,

The elm lay split hard by—
From bough to bole the elm was split,
And above was melody.

## THE MISSEL THRUSH

I saw the sky—the sky was lit,
The sky was lit with sun.
I saw a gray thrush by me flit ;

He sang no song—his song was done ;
I saw his studded breast ;
And plovers rose, ten score as one,
And ribboned in the East.

## THE LAST BLACKBIRD

My head was tired ; I had no mind to think
Of Beauty wronged and none to give redress :
I got me to a place where linnets drink
And lizards go in ferny loveliness.

A blackbird sang, so down I fell ; meseemed,
Soothed by his note, I closed a drowsy lid ;
And I was ventured on a dream—I dreamed
One stood and questioned me how linnets did.

And straight I knew who thus in angel guise
Would have my news—some trick of lip or brow
Guessed me her rank ; I said not otherwise
Than ill indeed it went with linnets now.

And with the words I got upon my feet;
Her look said she would hear if I had more:
I led her to an ancient mossy seat,
And blest the hour for my inquisitor.

"Nature," I said, "O thou whose hand controlled
And ordered chaos to a reasoned plan
With 'Know thou me, Old Night, and loose thy hold!'
And in whose accent Life and Love began:

"Whose 'Keep thou this, and thou that circuit go,'
Or 'Here stand thou, and thou in that place stand,'
Lifted a meek or laid a hot star low,
Chartered a sun or cancelled his command:

"Who flattered with an object aimless spheres,
And gave to each place, precedence and class,
Time and degree, till constancy was theirs,
And perfect system where no system was:

"Hear me! The blackbird piping from the hill,
His insolent wild eye—its yellow rim—
His coaly vest and yellow mandible—
Is he not thine? Wouldst thou continue him?

"Art thou still minded, Nature, to provide
The salts and sweets a frolic wagtail picks
Out of the spume that quilts an idle tide
Behind the trough where meeting waters mix?

"Hast thou a mind to keep a redstart dressed
As now and heretofore; to order still
Thy system of economy unguessed
That gives a shiver to his flaring quill?

"Wouldst thou still keep the chiff-chaff to his song,
And have him know to braid his grassy dome?
Wouldst knot and twist with many a weedy thong
The green confusion leaping round his home?

"Is still thy mind for wrens and little springs
And ferns and sudden stoats and popping mice,
And all the myriad noisy rainbow wings
That make the wood not less than Paradise?

"Wouldst in thy season strip the little wood
And hap it over with a frozen coat,
To spot a corner there with icy blood,
And stretch a rabbit with a frozen stoat?

"Hear me," I said. "Thy wood's a grandam's tale;
Its trees are felled; save one its birds are dead;
Thou art unqueened; now other hands prevail;
One blackbird lives—he is the last," I said.

And she, "The poisèd moths thy hand caressed,
Sip they not wines from fuchsias by the sea?
Runs clear no stream to bright a linnet's breast
Or sparkle in the moon? Nay, gladden me!

"Sure Beauty's in the pine the heron crost,
Or Beauty's on the heath or down or plain,
Or Beauty's on the yellow desert lost
In desert glare? Nay, make me glad again."

I said the place was changed where hawk-moths sipped
Eve's sugared cup; nor now was Beauty's mark
Upon the stream where once her linnets dipped,
And moony bubbles raced into the dark;

"Wild Beauty's left the down whereon she lay;
The heaths and plains are bare; shy Beauty's fled
The woods; fierce Beauty's left her desert day;
Beauty is fled or dead. Beauty is dead.

## THE LAST BLACKBIRD

"Yon blackbird with to-night will end his race."
I stopped, and Nature rose and looked abroad :
She came again and asked who ruled the place ;
I named then him who reigned its overlord.

"Thou madest all things equal under thee ;
To all thy gifts were Beauty, Love, and Youth."
"I pricked a vein that I might gladden me
With flower of that my seed thou callest Truth."

"Thou chosest one not fairer than his kin
To keep the story of thine eyes' delight."
"I gave a book to choice of mine wherein
To chronicle that pleasing in my sight."

"Who learned the letters equal to his task
To open ways beyond his right employ,
Who got him to a fiction and a mask
And hid the book he did not dare destroy!

" Not then he heard the noises in the cloud,
Nor cried his wonder when the leaf uncurled
After the wind, nor went he wonder-browed
Adoring when the rainbow spanned the world."

She said, " I gave him ears—" " He waxed them in."
" And sight: I taught him beauty was my sum."
" New gods he found: they taught him sight was sin."
" And speech and song." " He blasphemed or was dumb.

" On every wind his evil fame was blown;
His every step struck fear and panic doubt;
Suspect and shunned, he armed and went alone,
Or with sly wisdom walled himself about.

" He woodman turned and wide he laid his axe ;
Stream, hill, and heath, to all he put his hand,
Taxed pitilessly all ; all paid the tax ;
Only the sea ignored his ill demand.

" He saw thy hills and brought a newer plan ;
Hill, stream, and heath he tricked to evil whim ;
Only the sea ignored or countered Man,
Only the sea despised and countered him.

" And soon for sport a hunting he would go ;
The chase is over save for yon last bird
Whose wing to-morrow—" " Shout me this last woe ! "—
I shrank beneath the angers I had stirred—

" Whose wing to-morrow—shout ! This final prize—"
" Will deck his stony mate for holiday."
Ten thousand hells roared out of Nature's eyes,
She pressed her lids and shut the rage away.

"But knows he never midnight questioning?
Is every sense I gave him dead or dark?"
I said, "He knows he reigns to-day a king,
And has forgot the day he was thy clerk."

"Henceforward is this world his gaud, his toy;
If bones he wills, in bones the world will lie;
His to deflower, infect, defile, destroy—
Unless—" She said, "Thou hast a remedy?"

I said, "Save one, not I: reject, annul
Him, seed and breed and story, or have done
And send this world, thy Bubble Beautiful,
With sudden moth-want whirling at its sun."

She answered me, "The last was spoken ill.
My world is good; its streams may yet run pure;
My blackbird now is piping from the hill!"
She listened to his lazy overture.

## THE LAST BLACKBIRD

Miraculous old song! Our wonder met:
She turned away and listened to the bird.
"To-night," I said, "to-night he'll pay the debt."
"To-night," I said, but him alone she heard.

"Only the sea!" Then Nature, rising, stood:
"The chase is over; yon last bird is free.
Before I give new beauty to the wood,
How say'st thou, poet, to a wider sea?"

She looked above: small as a pigeon's wing
A cloud came up and crost the blackbird's tree.
She said, "How say'st thou if yon blackbird bring,
To wash my world, a deeper, wider sea?"

I woke. A dizzy man I reeling went
Round by the hill: a blackbird hurried by;
Clouds raced and cracked; to some high argument
Were hurrying the gossips of the sky.

## THE DOWN BY MOONLIGHT

The down looks new whose lonely slopes I
climb,
Yet is he old despite the dress he wears:
Old as the dark and concreate with Time,

Waste with the affliction of uncounted years.
A weary head he stretches to the pale
Of Heaven; one bended arm of him uprears

A shaggy fist, as if to turn the hail
And fire of tempest fraught with new distress
For his old brow; and one arm seems to trail

Its atrophied and bony nakedness
Down to the streams that bless the living land,
As if, to mitigate the loneliness,

He too would reach, as we, another's hand.
So quiet this hour is grown, a whisper's fall
Were sacrilege; within me as I stand

Shy wonder, waking, seems a common brawl,
And even thought itself is over loud;
Desire alone is dumb; no plovers call;

And if owls fly, their flight is unavowed
For cry I hear of theirs: peace here and far,
And save the moon's loved presence one lit cloud
Is sole 'twixt me and night's first listening star.

## HOLIDAY

I WOKE to hear the song that early rang
My boyhood on from Spring to fairer Spring,
The song of wonder, new as when I sprang

To its first note with boyish welcoming.
O may its glory fail not from my sense
Till Life—the Toll-bridge crost—unques-
tioning,

With Love alone, in last obedience,
Turns to the Dark; nay, even in that hour
When clay shall merge in final consequence

With clay, whose sod—moist cradle of some
flower,
Young heart's-ease blue or blest anemone—
Leaps to the sun, I would remained yet power

## HOLIDAY

In my cold ear to stir the heart of me
To heed if echoed faint such anthem there
As poured at waking from my window tree.
I rose and fed my soul on that sweet fare.

I rose and listened to the wildest lay
Brown song-thrush ever made to song-thrush
brown.
The wild song ended and I looked away

And saw the angel Sunshine on the down;
I saw her largen yellow on the green
Wide fields; I saw her slowly sweep and crown

The proudest elm the sun hath ever seen;
I saw her search along the hedge and find
The bluest violet ever sent to lean

A shy face from a too attentive wind;
Deep in the gloried elm the angel found
The mildest dove that for a mild dove pined;

## HOLIDAY

To her embrace I saw a skylark bound,
The loudest lark that ever dared the sun
Or, tranced with bliss, swooned from his own
sweet sound.

Where would my angel there a way she won
With melody for half a world and me.
Was never day for holiday begun
Like that a thrush hailed from my window
tree.

## THE LINNET

They say the world's a sham, and life a lease
Of nightmare nothing nicknamed Time, and we
Ghost voyagers in undiscovered seas
Where fact is feign; mirage, reality:

Where all is vain and vanity is all,
And eyes look out and only know they stare
At conjured coasts whose beacons rise and fall
And vanish with the hopes that feigned them there:

Where sea-shell measures urge a phantom dance
Till fancied pleasure drowns imagined pain—
Till Death stares madness out of countenance,
And vanity is all and all is vain.

## THE LINNET

It may be even as my friends allege.
I'm pressed to prove that life is something more—
And yet a linnet on a hawthorn hedge
Still wants explaining and accounting for.

## THE WINDS

Great scutcheoned moths with velvet hoods,
And moths whose wings bore no device,
Blundered out of dusky woods,

Constrained by some rare avarice
Or deeper sense not guessed by me,
To seek in flame their Paradise.

Bleaching fern and waning tree—
Tired of these the willow-wren
Sang and slipped off oversea.

No medalled thrush for music then!
And the blackbird cock made melody
No more than his brindled hen.

Hour in, hour out, the dragon-fly
Raced his image in a ditch
Blue with cloudless undersky ;

Or it was Night, then Night was rich
In eyes her own whose downward glance
Found every pool a glass in which

No cloud impaired her countenance,
When Autumn, a reluctant heir,
Came into his inheritance.

And long Night found no cloud impair
Her beauty where, in sun arrayed,
The dragon-fly still came to share

Blue waters with his burnished shade.
But the woodlands sickened surely ; now
Never tree but Autumn laid

Infecting fingers on its brow.
Pink with disease and fungus-dun,
A few leaves fell from a sunlit bough. . . .

I watched them falling, one by one—
The self-same leaves that opened new
Without a spot to self-same sun.

There came a time when Night wore through
And saw no moon in pool or stream;
Her steps were traced by dawn that grew

To day beneath a hindered beam;
And the sleepiest elm of a sleepy row
Pawed the wind that crost her dream;

And the woods around, aloft and low,
Fell troubled with many a wind;
Then half the winds came up to blow

With half the winds behind,
And a redbreast sang on a barley-mow
A dirge to a sun gone blind.

O now the rout of leaf and bough!
And O for memories of Spring!
To every leaf far-flying now

Some memory did cling—
The wood-wren dropt on a nearer spray,
His song and his shaking wing—

The thrush—the egg on scarce dry clay—
The thrush that woke before the dawn,
To first discover day,

And the song that came when blinds were
drawn,
And the quiet owl-time mapped for me
Upon a moon-washed lawn,

## THE WINDS

Under a wide-armed tree,
Faery Asias newly sprung
From a green, enchanted sea—

O seemed with every dead leaf wrung
From every branch once green,
And on the tide of refuse flung,

There went a leaf unseen,
From spoiling boughs of memory
Some grace of what had been.

Now far beneath a billow sky
The rape of woods was borne :
No hedge but there went piracy,

No thief but stripped some thorn ;
And the bough that gave not with the blast
The closer bough was shorn.

No tree in the pelt of wind and waste,
Sheer to the dint of all,
But seemed of weariness at last

Herself half green must fall,
With twice a hundred thieves to sack
Her ruined coronal.

'Twixt elms across the tempest's track
Tossed one more vast than they;
Her story told a woodland wrack

Spread far as woodland day;
From the measure of wealth her branches
bore
No wind that blew but took its prey.

And winds were here in many a score,
Scraping, screwing, gnawing some,
Like rats on a granary floor;

And winds to crawl and clasp were come—
Winds sprung from a serpent seed;
And winds to rive and throttle from

Starved packs of a wolfish breed;
And many a wind could fancy find
Fetched out of hills at eagle speed

To stun and bruise and thrash and grind,
To clout and tug and clip and tease;
And they roared and drummed and blared and
whined

And bleated and whistled in fifty keys,
And sighed and howled and sang and mewed,
Winds of divers and all degrees,

A preying maniacal multitude,
Avid as they whose furies hew
A ship into sticks of kindling-wood

A morrow's gentler tides shall strew
Round tearful isles and isthmuses
With an eyeless, bony crew.

Anon, anon, nor end nor ease!
I let Imagination feign
Great beating hearts in wooden trees,

Gave wits and sense to knot and grain,
And saw a heart-broke elm go mad
Betwixt a bedlam twain.

Their leaves a whirling myriad,
Forth Autumn's windy lip,
Fled up a weedy field that had

No tree her tooth might strip;
Some fell and some made haste anew
As slaves that heard the whip;

Then many fell; a far-borne few
Lost now and later seen,
Tossed high above a hedge into

A tree nor red nor green,
And they trickled through her skeleton
Like ashes through a screen.

So Night without a moon came on
A land of sunless day,
Enriching still with carrion

The manors of decay
Must woods and valleys never fair
That skirt the Year's highway.

Dread mists and mildew flourish there,
And tumour-blooms endow
With poisoned sweets the cold, dead air.

Naught of beauty with me now
But, like dead leaves left behind
Staring from a frosty bough,
Would be off with any wind.

## MY BOOKS

When the folks have gone to bed,
And the lamp is burning low,
And the fire burns not so red
As it burned an hour ago,

Then I turn about my chair
So that I can dimly see
Into the dark corner where
Lies my modest library.

Volumes gay and volumes grave,
Many volumes have I got;
Many volumes though I have,
Many volumes have I not.

## MY BOOKS

I have not the rare Lucasta,
London, 1649:
I'm a lean-pursed poetaster,
Or the book had long been mine.

I have not an early Herrick;
I have wanted Dowland too,
Since that lover of a lyric,
Symonds, wrote "The Key of Blue."

Never has my luck been lashed
To the Mariner of York,
And in First edition washed
To my bookshelf: egg of auk

Never was so rare as this
Volume that earned Dan Defoe
Deathless literary bliss.
I have not Ned Ward, nor know

That the rhyming knave I want
  Who did such a merry ill
To Don Quixote ; D'Avenant,
  Too, I lack, and Aaron Hill.

Books of travel ; books of sport ;
  Books of no or some or great
Theological import ;
  Books about affairs of State,

Absent are with many others ;
  I can't boast an early Donne,
Nor the "Poems by Two Brothers,"
  Though I have *a* Tennyson.

But enough of treasures lacking !
  If my cloak is frayed and torn,
I will send King Covet packing,
  And present the cloak as worn.

Are my senses gone asleep?
  Sure I hear John Suckling laugh
From his grave in ancient sheep,
  As, hard by, in mottled calf,

London, 1651,
  Lab'ring Carew once more sighs
Through a score of sonnets on
  Mistress Celia's long-closed eyes.

Comes a rather female song,
  Sweet and sad; 'tis Tommy Moore
Singing of Ierne's wrong
  Just as Tommy sang of yore.

Near him Rogers bitterly
  Wails this oddest freak of Fate's—
Folks, he hears, buy "Italy"
  Only for the charming plates.

Near the "Wit's Interpreter"
(Like an antique Whitaker,
Full of strange etcetera),
"Areopagitica,"

And the muse of Lycidas,
Lost in meditation deep,
Give the cut to Hudibras,
Unaware the knave's asleep.

There the tinker's wond'rous son
(Lately come into his own)
Urges still the Pilgrim on,
Shouts again for Mansoul Town.

Written by a friend of Keats,
That torn fragment next the Clare
Lightly of "The Fancy" treats.
Next to Masson's Essays, there,

## MY BOOKS

In three volumes Bagehot lies:
  Wiser pen among the witty,
Wittier among the wise,
  Never wrote about the City.

On the broad back of his race
  Swift, there, cuts with savage art
Half a fiend's, half ass's face;
  Will time ever soothe the smart?

There lies Coleridge, bound in green,
  Sleepily still wond'ring what
He meant Kubla Khan to mean.
  In that early Wordsworth, Mat

Arnold knows a faithful prop,—
  Still to subject-matter leans,
Murmurs of the loved hill-top,
  Fyfield tree and Cumnor scenes.

## MY BOOKS

Ayrshire's Peasant-Poet-King
  Sang his soul into that page,
Stopped—a lark shot on the wing—
  Just as his muse came of age.

..

There is Byron, nowadays
  Held in small repute by some.
He must do without their praise.
  And there's Shake—and THERE I'm dumb.

Fauna of my crowded shelves,
  Birds of an unequal quill,
There they roost like labelled elves,
  Waiting mine or Fate's last will.

On a day outside my ken,
  Soon maybe or haply late,
These will pass to other men;
  *One* will know a rarer fate.

## MY BOOKS

Book of cloud and wind and sea,
  More than all the others mine,
Ere the Roll is called for me
  Knowest what end will be thine?

I will have thee to the fire;
  So thy Parent went his way,
After ocean stilled his lyre,
  From the sands of Spezzia.

## IN FANCY FAIR

Fancy at her garden gate:
Fancy may have long to wait.
Pole to Line and sun to snow:
Fancy may have far to go.

Memory hath dreams: the birds,
Prisoned sobs and passioned words.
In the waking sun they stand,
Life's drab riddle in his hand.

Thrushes, O be silent now . . .
Now with song record his vow.
Shrink not, daisies, as they kneel.
Part they now for woe or weal.

Hope is hers and hers long prayer,
His a loop of her dark hair :
Hope is hers, he'll win the world :
Fancy's sails are wide unfurled.

He will come again at noon,
His bright way with roses strewn.
From the turnpike wave good-bye,
From the hill-top—hope is high !

Wave her wait and wave him well . . .
Memory no more may tell.
Hope is high : O then beware !
Gauds are cheap in Fancy Fair.

Now a gray dream fancy weaves :
Roses change to cypress leaves.
He lies bleeding, dying, far
In the cloud and wrack of war ;

Or in hunger walks and want,
Hope a spent illuminant.
He has sunk (God !), sold to shame
A dishonoured, ancient name ;

Or, though victor in the race,
Is forsworn : some fairer face
Lures his soul to Lethe letch.
Mark ye how that grisly wretch,

Wrinkled Doubt, the malice-eyed,
Mad his midnight mare doth ride . . .
Fear and lies and old despair
Haunt the lanes of Fancy Fair.

Face them, Fancy, show thy whip !
Pariahs ! each lifted lip—
Each red coward mouth will flee
To the kennels. Comfort thee.

## IN FANCY FAIR

Take new roses for thy breast:
He will dream and come to rest.
In the shadows he will come;
Do thou fend with faith his home.

Slow the deep tear upward wells,
Fancy changing sentinels—
Fancy at her garden gate:
Fancy may have long to wait.

## THROWN

I'm down, good Fate, you've won the
race;
Bite deep and break a tooth in me;
Now spit your poison in my face,
And let me be;
Leave me an hour and come again
With insults new and further pain.

For of your tooth I'll make a pen,
And of your slaver ink, and will
I bring a joy to being then
To race you still:
A laughing child with feathered heels
Who shall outspeed your chariot wheels.

## THE HAMMERS

Noise of hammers once I heard,
Many hammers, busy hammers,
Beating, shaping, night and day,
Shaping, beating dust and clay
To a palace; saw it reared;
Saw the hammers laid away.

And I listened, and I heard
Hammers beating, night and day,
In the palace newly reared,
Beating it to dust and clay:
Other hammers, muffled hammers,
Silent hammers of decay.

## BEAUTY SPRITE

False lights and shifting sand—
Black way and rough and long—
Lost men and like to fail—
This much is ours:

Sometimes to strike a trail,
Sometimes to hear a song,
Sometimes to seize a hand,
I even yours.

Go with me till the sun
Mine be and yours,
Star and companion,
Ours, even ours.

## THE ROSE

How praise the rose! Let praise go by:
Let us not praise where praising were
To underpraise; we may come nigh,
Withholding praise, to praising her.

## QUARTER-DAY

Death asked: the debtor bit his lip
And offered something on account;
Death smiled and took a closer grip:
The debtor paid the full amount.

## THE NIGHT

Fond muse surrender, weary as thou art,
To sleep at last; a meadow's breadth from thee,
In yon dim copse and still, a sister heart
Hath respite from its old sweet agony.

The wall of night is up; around, across,
Above nor sound nor sense of day remains;
Comes only now the fitful drive and toss
Of moths upon the yellow window-panes.

## AN ERRING MUSE

Out! Wretched Rhyme, and none of my be-
getting!
Quit! Go thy ways; I say I'll none of
thee!
Fie on thee, Muse, that thou shouldst go
coquetting
With every losel that would sport with me.

Now am I one whom Fate hath countered
slyly;
In me behold a bard dispirited—
Joined with a muse whom Mischance, jesting
dryly,
To spite my fame hath sued and brought to
bed.

## AN ERRING MUSE

Where wert thou, Metre, when the churl espied her,
And planned to mar the lustre of my song?
Wherefore was thy protection then denied her,
To her undoing and my lyric wrong?

Go to! I will to Prose and win his favour.
Too soon my lyric wine is at the lee;
Too soon my lyric salt hath lost its savour;
I will to Prose and pray him succour me.

Nay, go! I'm stone: I say I'll not resume her.
Her mention adds new venom to my smart!
Ay, get her hence! let pies and crows unplume her,
And blank annihilation end her part!

One moment still, let me upbraid her roundly!
Was never bard so villainously vexed
And put about by trollop muse, but soundly
I will repay who hath me thus perplexed.

## AN ERRING MUSE

Thou cart-tail queen! Go, blandish with thine ogles
The bloodless breast of midnight's baleful king;
From his embrace let riving imps and bogles,
Ghast moonlight jinn, and morrow-madness spring.

Lost dam of Mischief! Dost thou hope to melt me
With tears less salt than those whose scalding brine
Clings round the thrust thy evil gaming dealt me,
To smart its depth while mortal years are mine?

She weeps, she only weeps, nor heeds nor hears me.
At every turn I face ill fortune's prong,
Yet know not whether most her weeping tears me,
Or I am torn with anger at my wrong.

## AN ERRING MUSE

Ay me! I would not mete her fault too shrewdly,
Nor nag her to an ecstasy of shame;
Whom once I loved I would not drive too rudely
To wail in exile her lost lyric name.

Nay, how shall I, least worthy son of Adam,
Glad heir to half the sins he left entail,
Deliver judgment on this erring madam,
Compel her to a convent and the veil?

Now 'shrew me that would send a woman weeping,
What was the work this pother's all about?
It seems some mischance found my metre sleeping,
Whose place it was to keep such rascals out.

Well then? Well then, what doth the scurvy varlet
But whisk my lady off without a word.
And she? And she, she says, went crimson scarlet
And screamed like anything, but no one heard.

And then? And then, of course, the raff besought her
With "pretty" this and "pretty" that—in brief,
To such a pass this woundy mischief brought her,
That she hath borne a brat beyond belief.

Well there, maybe I've split a straw too finely,
Too bitter mixed an erring muse's cup;
I must look on such matters more benignly. . . .
Ay, I'll entreat a kiss and make it up.

Two eyes of tears! What, human, can withstand 'em,
Ten thousand angers trumpeting their force?
Two eyes of tears will presently disband 'em,
And list 'em into armies of remorse.

Then come, sweet Muse, no longer nurse thy sorrow;
I'll father this and any rhyme of thine;
Forget as I forgive, and I to-morrow
Will advertise the world the babe is mine.

## AN ELEGY UPON A POEM RUINED BY A CLUMSY METRE

Gaze on thy deed, damned Metre, and be dumb!
Lies dead the Joy that sought in thy embrace
A hostelry, and found, alas! a tomb:
Look, and with penitential tears efface

From memory the scarlet of thy sin.
Yet ere erasure sun thy soul again,
Brook my brief lamentation; let me win
For that last effluence of my fevered brain,

A niche in Fame's high temple. . . . Jewel rare
As ever yet from that dim pit and deep,
Man's mind, was dug: sweet flower and frail as fair,
Too early wakened from a wintry sleep—

## AN ELEGY

For thee I mourn and pitch a peevish key!
Spring from thy wat'ry pillow, Truth, and hear;
Come sisters twain, thou clear-eyed Sanity
And stern-browed Sense, come lend a patient ear.

Oft with Imagination I have bored
And tunnelled like a mole the sacred soil
Of Poesy; and with her I have soared
Above the clouds to spy among and spoil

The furthest fields of Heaven; at her command
I've walked below the sea and cut my way
Through mucous wrecks that strew the stretchèd sand
'Twixt western Ind and impotent Cathay;

And in her sight, beneath an English sky,
I've shared his dreams who on the Asian plain
Left crook and shears and rode to empery,
And half a world bowed under Tamerlane.

Old Druids on the downs have watched with me
For revelation from a silent star,
And I, as even they, have bent a knee
To Caturix, and sung with them to war.

I've read the books: stained record of Man hurled
Against himself; thus taught each ruined page—
From birth to adolescence spun the world
Through tides of woe, and will to wrinkled age.

Save that drear lore small profit there was mine;
Yet this: who breaks the idols of Man's past,
To build anew for men a later shrine,
But builds to be his own iconoclast.

Ev'n in the dim recess of my own mind
I've dared to look; held inquisition there,
Strange riddles solved and mysteries divined,
Nigh laid the secret of my being bare;

Seen Impulse in the seed whose sudden flower
Too often blows to hide a barbèd stem;
Seen Pleasure, surfeit with her own sweet dower,
Fade to a spectre with a diadem.

There in the seventh cellar of my soul
I've crushed the stone where Malice tipped her spears;
And raked the dust of Anger's burnt-out coal,
And watched with awe the genesis of tears.

And this fair thing I've seen: Hope, lightning bright,
But not inconstant like the sword of Heaven,
And smiling still in her own dear despite
When Desperation through my soul has driven.

But not for me Imagination throve
From song-born seed new ecstasy so wild,
Nor woke lost captain's battle shouts and wove
Wild dream so new as wert thou, her dead Child.

Nor ever to Imagination's wand
Came aught so rare from land or sky or sea,
Nor aught so shy or bright or strange I scanned
When Introspection bared my depths to me;

Nor in the stainèd books I found displayed,
Though angels wept there, tear so pure; nor I,
From wrecked beliefs whose altars long withstayed
Truth's certain tide, beheld, that might not die,

One pale flame kindle beautiful as wert
Thou, unblown Flower and fadeless: lo! beneath
These lilac boughs, in warm grass pansy girt,
I hide thy urn and leave this rhymèd wreath.

## THE VANITY OF HUMAN AMBITION AND BIG BEHAVIOUR

O now all ye whom Arrogance brought low,
  Whom Folly or Illusion's Judas-kiss
Entangled in a labyrinth of woe—
  Children of Dream and heirs of Nemesis—

Awake, arise, and let your deeds be told;
  Come forth and in Dissuasion's service win
The little note denied your deeds of old:
  Fame's door is wide, ye need but enter in.

Behold as thick as gnats at evenglow
  They come a jaunty herohood, agog
To turn this work—if I may put it so—
  Into a lyric Dic. of Nat. Biog.

## HUMAN AMBITION

A pushing fellow, seeking note and fame,
Went out to break a lance with Xiphias;
Archbishop Willson says our hero's name
Was Coe. The learned prelate, if he, as

One likes to think, spoke not without the book
Before he disallowed such names as Lee,
Burdette and Gray, and Parkinson and Hook,
And Mackintosh and Dixon and McGee,[1]

As having claims too shadowy and thin
For cold consideration in the case,
Might anyway have said where Coe's came in:
Occasion finds odd logic in his Grace.[2]

But Parkinson, Coe, Dixon, or Burdette,
Lee, Mackintosh, or Hook, McGee or Gray,
He died B.C., to Pompeii's regret;
The good Archbishop, too, has passed away.

[1] "Life and Letters," edited by Llewellen Lane. Also see "Side-saddle and Steamboat in South Europe," by Lady Grahame-Price.

[2] As witness his peculiar views on the Ruyan Monarchy, "Life and Letters," chap. xxiii.

The tale, then, it is mine to tell will show
To what unseemly shift a bard is pressed,
Who, doubting not the evidence for Coe,
Would neither in discredit hold the rest.

Did Mackintosh know fear? The slender bill
Wherewith he armed to turn the other's blade,
And swift thereafter pink him in the gill,
Was tough and keen. Burdette was not afraid.

Hook eyed the fish. The argent orb of night
With tender longing wan looked on the sea,
And flung a wreath of kisses to the white
Young wanton waves. The monster eyed McGee.

Gray stood his ground. The supersensuous
air
Toyed sadly with the shimmering strands of
spray
That, like a languid naiad's tangled hair,
Shone opalescent. Lee now looked away,

For Parkinson was bored. The lucent wave
With rhythmic lassitude fell to and fro
O'er many a spongy lawn and haunted
cave
Of dim crustacea. Dixon turned to go.

Then time was called; above Night's widening
plume
With numerous glimmering stars was
gemmed about,
Whose pale effulgence fell to re-illume
The sun-lorn waste, and Coe was counted
out.

## HUMAN AMBITION

Not with the noise and blare of sounded brass
And common hum that marks a prince returned,
But like the gent who comes about the gas,
Unasked, unblest, unkissed, and unconcerned,

Truth comes to Man (who rarely questions whence
Or why, if come she must, she comes so late)
And takes the sum of his incompetence,
And drops a tract and leaves him to his fate.

One sore chagrined with envy of the Cid,
Came out of Crim by way of the Levant,
And sailed to Spain and settled in Madrid,
And looked about and wagered a byzant

That he would snare, disarm, and bring to land
The stoutest cuttle in the Spanish Main,
And jumped off Gib. and snared a cuttle, and
Came never more upon the coast of Spain.

Not Policy, slow tracing like a worm,
Circuitous and dim through sunless ways,
To crown a painful, calculated term
With high achievement and a people's praise,

But Impulse, blind, inconsequent, and vain,
Called on the joyless mameluke, Githar—
Whom John of Teflis lost to Smandercane
When last he met the Usbec prince in war—

To pelt his uncle Selim with the soap
What time the elder took his morning tub.
Did Uncle Selim wanly smile and hope
That time would yet teach manners to the cub?

Or did he rise as, reader, thou hadst done,
And as in honour he was bound to do,
And talk it over with his sister's son?
These knew and wept the course he took, these knew:

## HUMAN AMBITION

Melodious bulbuls in the almond trees,
The flaming carp that lit the palace pond,
The doe-led fawns in forest fastnesses
That twisted many a tangled mile beyond;

And on the windy hills the antelopes,
And gibbering bats in scented lemon groves,
And eagles screaming at the mountain tops,
And in the gloomy cedars cushat doves;

And in the hot blue sky the wand'ring crane,
And in the hot blue sky the circling kite,
And on the hot, eye-baffling desert plain,
Dry, gliding things of fell or futile spite;

And in the folded leaf the folded worm,
And dreaming in the bark the chrysalis,
And in the soaring, wind-borne seed the germ
Of jungles yet to know their genesis;

And at the lonely well mid Ira's heat,
In tent or dhow or bagnio or bazar,
At silent tomb or in the swarming street,
From Trebizonde and Kars to Bussarah,

From Antioch to Tartar Samarkand,
Boor, bassa, bedouin, infidel, and Turk:
These knew and wept Githar's mad folly, and
These knew what supervened upon his work.

No tyrant drunk with pride and armed with power,
His throne a shambles and his music war,
No hero hot and ripened to the hour,
And for its quick salvation singular,

Was Jil the Giaur, a lad of Ascalon,
Whose humour crost the toothèd thing of Nile:
His tibia turned up, and long time won
From women tears, from men a mirthless smile.

## HUMAN AMBITION

At Susa by the Midland Sea, one Tegg,
A potboy and reputed for a quiz,
No reptiles handy, pulled the pieman's leg;
The boy, however, got away with his.

The Bagdad Pipe-rolls tell how one, a beau,
Kicked McHaroun, the barber, for a joke,
How caution ruled the canny figaro,
And what Mac done to pay the fancy bloke.

Now from the gloom that wraps two nameless stones,
The shades of . . . and . . . invite my pen
To trace their faulty day, and from their bones
Pick wisdom in the name of living men.

Their earthly habitat was Bagdad town,
And, as coevals of the barber Mac,
Were subjects of that prince who owed his crown
To brother Achmet sleeping on his back.

With soundy argument at dawn they met,
And saw the sun go down the Occident
(Ay me! where late another sun had set
For Avon stream) with soundy argument.

They bragged in terms of angle, hound, and lure,
Of family, of friend, of dice and ball,
Of virtue, vice, and love, and literature,
And grew, by easy stages, personal.

"Thou cringing turnspit! with thy kin debate!
Peace, ere some mastiff tire of thee and thrust,
With too much honour for thy mean estate,
A peevish paw and merge thee with the dust!"

"Nay, upstart bantam, strut with them thy size;
Crow back thy kidneys' with an equal note;
Contend with such as, beating thee, would prize
The lowly glory of thy silenced throat!"

"Be dumb, glib pyot, lest thy noise offend
The eyried falcon's sense till, wearied, he
Incline his wing thy way and condescend
To stoop and strike and, striking, cancel thee!"

They scowled, lip weary; stars came over new;
The stars looked on them and a moonbeam fell;
The moonbeam lit them as they went unto
An antique chamber looking on the Mall.

And there for aye they laid their tongues to rest,
And took them staves and locked the attic door,
And drew the window-blind, and never guessed
The frail condition of the attic floor.

So stood these lads to arms, all unaware
What fiends and angels pitied them or mocked,
What fiends and angels trod the attic stair,
And entered by the door on mortals locked.

Thus, masking in the winter face of Truth,
Came Disillusion, dreary ghost, and sped
A fletchèd arrow barbed with Reason's tooth—
That instant Hope fell bleeding and lay dead.

Came Hate, sure signet still of serpent power
In human hearts, and with obscene excess
Joyed in the clasp of Scorn; the pride and flower
And pink of devildom came there to press

Their sovereign's loathly suit with added spite
For that dread Hour ere yet the first slow beat
Of young Time's pulse responded to the flight
Of years; came thither, too, on wandering feet

Whom men name Chance, nor seemed he well
to know
What brought him to that place, what
faithful star
Or faithless urged his stay, yet did he throw
Among his peers assembled wide and far—

If I may use the term when all were met
Beneath a ceiling twelve feet by fifteen—
No little consternation, so he set
A good example, and no more was seen.

Now Expectation waited in the air,
And ten-tongued Rumour from her leash
ran free—
A mouthy brach; came from her fetid lair
The bat-eyed harridan old Prophecy,

Her ashen locks wild strewn about her brow;
And License came, sweet Liberty's rude twin;
Mute over all hung heedless Fate, and now
The palsied despot Crisis shuffled in.

Here leave the lads: I would not were detailed
Their story further; only would I tell
That midnight's gilt elaboration paled
Above a silent attic on the Mall. . . .

The Caliph Ali went to Ispahan
And backed a mule there in a steeplechase;
His fancy won, and then the bookie ran;
The punter lost a pony on the race.

Likewise the Cypriot El Ezra, he
Who took a tester to a ducatoon
About the colt by Nix-Mnemosyne
To win the Sherbet Stakes at Scandaroon,

What fun was his? Who so will stake his lot,
Impelled thereto by nescience or whim,
Cupidity or innocence or not,
On Chance's colours, let men pray for him.

Yet may he sit serene and well content,
When others nose the future for his hurt,
Who, beautiful and wise and prescient,
Shall gamble all he hath upon a cert.

Ah, little thought King Cheops long ago—
Yet wherefore, to what end, why deeper drink
At brackish wells and fountains of old woe!
What matters now what Cheops didn't think!

What matters now what siren song beguiled
The steps of Mna, most loved of Andæ's sons,
Or that in Coac's sun-charred desert wild
He wrote repentance with his whited bones!

Nay, cease; Dissuasion cannot surely ask
A shrewder schedule of Oblivion's gains;
O cease! my muse is weary of her task,
And would on other themes expend her pains.

## DULCINA, A BULL-TERRIER

Dulcina was, then suns rebelled
And trod th' eternal word;
To every ball its limits held,
The universe was stirred.

World embryons, in chaos rolled,
Knew system at her cry,
And hoary planets ages cold
Policed anew the sky.

Suns came and sun's star's satellites
To sing Dulcina's power,
And myriad moons left myriad nights
To keep a pagan hour.

## DULCINA, A BULL-TERRIER

In rebel red extravagance
The flaming legions came;
In her transplendent brilliance
They paled to candle flame,

And praised above all dams her dam,
And gave her sire reward,
And hailed me blest o'er all who am
Her bondsman and her bard;

Who sees in her all things glassed fair,
And Paradise would fly,
That wanting her were angel bare
And drear felicity.

## THE GREAT AUK'S GHOST

The Great Auk's ghost rose on one leg,
Sighed thrice and three times winkt,
And turned and poached a phantom egg,
And muttered, "I'm extinct."

## THE FINAL DODO

The final Dodo gathered wool
Upon a mountain side;
His energy was wonderful,
And finally he died.

## FAREWELL

Go, little book; fear not thy fate;
Though men deride and rail
And pass thee by, yet Truth is great,
By Jove! and will prevail.

## TO MY MUSE

O MELIC Muse, whose constant love
  Sustained my timorous reed ;
Darned threadbare Fancy's vest, or wove
  New garments to her need ;

Cheered Metre when his heart was down,
  Or gently plied the spur,
And brought us all to Finis Town
  To seek a Publisher :

Go not ! Brave heart, and gay as true,
  Till Time ebb out stay by
To teach my straw, then let us two
  Pipe down Eternity.




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BORROWER'S NAME
TELLE ALMA A
OFFICE STAFF

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